



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Help Build The Exploration Trail – July 16!

Are you an “outdoorsy” person that likes to hike and get involved in nature? Do you like to contribute to your community, learn new things, or just enjoy spending time outdoors with other like-minded people? Then join us Saturday, July 16, 2005, from 9am to 3pm for the Exploration Trail Community Trail Building Day. This is your chance to get involved in an historic project in recreation history. The Exploration Trail is a 4.5-mile family hiking trail located in the National Children's Forest in Running Springs. Construction is nearing completion, but this community project would not be complete without community participation. Come out and have fun with Children's Forest Youth Leaders and staff, Forest Service specialists and your neighbors on Saturday, July 16, 2005 to help put the finishing touches on this new jewel of the forest. Learn how to build

a hiking trail, enjoy breathtaking backcountry, spend the day with friends and help make history on your National Forest.

Once completed, thousands of locals and visitors will enjoy the Exploration Trail for decades to come. Children's Forest Association and the San Bernardino National Forest-Mountaintop Ranger District will host the Community Trail Building Day in which anyone age 10 or older can participate. Children under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. The project will begin at 9am and conclude at 3pm. Come to the Children's Forest Visitor Information Center/Deerlick Fire Station in Running Springs, right off of Highway 18, ¼ mile east of down town Running Springs. Participants must arrive at 9am to complete the orientation, safety and tool training in order to participate. **The first 100 participants to arrive for the 9am training will receive an official Exploration Trail Crew T-Shirt, Forest Service Centennial Pin and sticker.** Participants should wear long pants, sturdy shoes, a long sleeve shirt, gloves and a hat for protection from the sun. Also, bring a backpack with water and your lunch, sunscreen and a jacket or sweatshirt for layering, as weather and temperature can vary this time of year.

The Exploration Trail is a very important and unique project. The trail is the culmination of a partnership between Children's Forest Association, Rim of the World Recreation and Parks District, the San Bernardino National Forest, and the USDA National Forest's Centennial Project Program and the Forest Service Adventure Pass Program. Although these are the primary funding partners, many other partners conceived of the idea of the trail and helped support the original grant, including the Running Springs Chamber, Soroptimists, the Sierra Club-San Geronimo Chapter, Running Spring Water District, CalTrans and other agencies community groups interested in improving recreation opportunities in the area. Most importantly, **this trail was designed and mapped by children** from the Rim of the World Unified School District. In 2002, eight teenagers

spent 10 full days working with Forest Service specialists and Children's Forest Association professionals to learn about recreation planning, trail design, natural interpretation, GPS mapping, grading, and trail engineering. The initial youth Trailblazing Team developed a plan for this trail that climbs through the center of the 3,400 acres of the National Children's Forest. The trail winds through some of the most unique and beautiful backcountry on the San Bernardino National Forest.

Forest Supervisor, Gene Zimmerman recognized those who made the trail possible by saying, "Thanks to some passionate Children's Forest Youth Volunteers and some great partners like the Rim of the World Recreation and Parks District, the Running Springs Chamber, and the Children's Forest Association, the forest will soon have another great hiking trail. The Children's Forest Exploration Trail will be another great example of what we can achieve by working together. My hat is off to everyone who has worked to put this partnership together." The USDA Forest Service recognizes this project as so significant that it has not only received funding from the Washington, DC Forest Service Centennial Program, but it has been designated as an official Forest Service Centennial Project.

For more information on the Exploration Trail Community Trail Building Day, please contact Lacy Kelly of Children's Forest Association at (909) 382-2776.

Children's Forest Association is one of 6 programs managed by the San Bernardino National Forest Association (SBNFA) a 501 c 3 nonprofit. The mission of Children's Forest is to give youth a legitimate voice in management of the forest and to instill stewardship values. Children's Forest partners with the U.S.D.A. Forest Service and is funded through grants, donations and corporate sponsorships. For information or to make a contribution, contact Lacy Kelly at (909) 382-2776.